

ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDELINES



FOR KARMA KAGYU BUDDHIST
MONASTERIES, CENTERS AND COMMUNITY



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These guidelines were made possible through the contributions of the following:

Dekila Chungyalpa, World Wildlife Fund, who provided assistance and advice in the development of the guidelines. May her efforts bring benefit to all sentient beings.

Leslie and Terris Nguyen Temple, who painted the cover thangka and illustrated the text. May their work continue to highlight and restore the legacy of Tibetan Buddhist art.

The translators who produced the different versions of these guidelines so that they are easy to use by the monastic community and the wider sangha.

The many editors and advisors who provided practical suggestions and improvements for the guidelines.

People all over the world who work to raise awareness, protect the environment, and build harmonious values.

© 2008 His Holiness the Seventeenth Gyalwang Karmapa,
Ogyen Trinley Dorje
Material from this book can be used freely but
please acknowledge the source

Layout and design by Somchai Singsa
Printed at Archana, New Delhi
www.archanapress.com

Contents

	Pages
Foreword by His Holiness, the Seventeenth Karmapa	1
Introduction	3
Section 1: Forest Protection	6
Section 2: Water Protection	10
Section 3: Wildlife Protection	13
Section 4: Waste Management	16
Section 5: Addressing Climate Change	19
Conclusion	23

Foreword

In the past, people in most parts of the world had a very straightforward relationship with the environment. They used the resources provided by nature as needed and due to the simplicity of their lives, rarely did great damage to the Earth. However, this has changed considerably in more recent times. Not only are our lives no longer so simple, our relationship with the environment is much more complicated and we now have tremendous power to do it harm.

Our lifestyle in the 21st century makes huge demands on the environment. We use more and more resources like fossil fuels, timber and water without any understanding of what the outcomes will be. We think we need all kinds of gadgets, toys and machines without stopping to think if these are really important and useful to us. Sometimes there seems to be no natural limit to human desires. But there is a limit to how much Mother Earth can sustain us and we cannot afford to indulge in our desires unthinkingly.

During the time of the Buddha, the monastic community lived carefully and frugally and nothing was wasted. I have read that when new robes were offered to the monks, the old robes were used to cover their cushions and mattresses. When those covers wore out, the cloth was used as dusters and finally when even that wore out it was mixed with clay and used to plaster the walls.

The Buddha followed a way of life that did not fall into either of two extremes-utter poverty and suffering on the one hand or accumulation and hoarding on the other. Monks lived from day to day with no need to store food and resources and such a lifestyle accorded with the middle way. The Buddha didn't want a monk's life to be very difficult, but neither did he encourage the hoarding of offerings from the faithful. Similarly, today our lifestyle should be neither too hard nor overly indulgent.

When writing about the Bodhisattva vow, Chandragomen said:

*For others and also for yourself,
Do what is useful even if painful,
And what is both useful and pleasurable,
Not what gives pleasure but is of no use.*

So, if something we want brings benefit but does not harm us or the environment, then we can think of it as necessary. But, if that is not the case, we should certainly think twice about why we want it and if we need it at all.

Still, this is something that individuals must weigh up and choose for themselves. Making this kind of active decision means that you are making a choice with some confidence and not just blindly. In this way you can match your actions to your aspirations.

I was born in 1985, in a very remote area without modern amenities. As a result, I grew up experiencing the old way of life as it had been led for centuries in Tibet. People were very careful about how they used water, wood, and other resources. I don't remember there being any garbage because people found a use for everything. They were careful to not spoil the springs from which they took their drinking water. In fact, I remember that as a child I planted a tree to protect our local spring and asked my father to look after it once I left for Tsurphu.

People in my homeland may not have much formal education but we have inherited a deep traditional concern for the environment. Even the children regard many of the mountains and rivers in their landscape and some of the wild animals as sacred and treat them with respect accordingly. This is part of their family heritage and our cultural tradition.

These days, however, I hear there is a move for nomads to settle down and become farmers. The traditional way of life is rapidly fading away. The communities that are settling down use more resources; they cut a lot more trees and they generate a lot more garbage, which needs to be disposed of. Farming means that the grasslands themselves will disappear and maybe the soil itself will not be able to sustain this lifestyle without more and more fertilizers and chemicals.

Many of these aspects of life are similar throughout the Himalayan region. The Tibetan Plateau and the Himalayan region are especially important because they are the watershed for much of Asia; therefore I hope that the people who live here can set an example of how to take care of the environment. Many of the people in this region are Buddhist, and have a respect for the Buddha dharma. I hope that their faith and devotion will be a source of practical benefit for all beings and bring peace and harmony in the world. Otherwise our prayers for the welfare of all sentient beings will not be much more than words of consolation.

We have already done such immense damage to the environment that it is almost beyond our power to heal it. As a small step, I requested during the 25th Kagyu Monlam in 2007 that environmental protection and community service be incorporated into the program. Climate change is having a direct effect on our lives here in this region, more than most places. Therefore, I advised all the monasteries and the wider public with whom I have a connection to engage actively wherever they could to protect the environment.

Building on this, and combining the Buddhist tradition and our respectful attitude to the environment with contemporary science and practices, I have directed the following guidelines. They are but a small drop in a huge ocean. The challenge is far more complex and extensive than anything we alone can tackle. However, if we can all contribute a single drop of clean water, those drops will accumulate into a fresh pond, then a clear stream and eventually a vast pure ocean. This is my aspiration.

Written by the Seventeenth Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, at Gyuto Monastery in Dharamsala on October 1st 2008



Introduction

Our ancestors viewed the earth as rich and bountiful, which it is. Many people in the past also saw nature as inexhaustibly sustainable, which we now know is the case only if we care for it. It is not difficult to forgive destruction in the past that resulted from ignorance. Today however, we have access to more information, and it is essential that we re-examine ethically what we have inherited, what we are responsible for, and what we will pass on to coming generations.

[His Holiness, the Dalai Lama]

Aspiration

As dharma practitioners, we want to turn the wheel of dharma so that all living beings can be freed from suffering. Wherever there is suffering, we wish to transform it into happiness and equanimity.

Dependent Arising

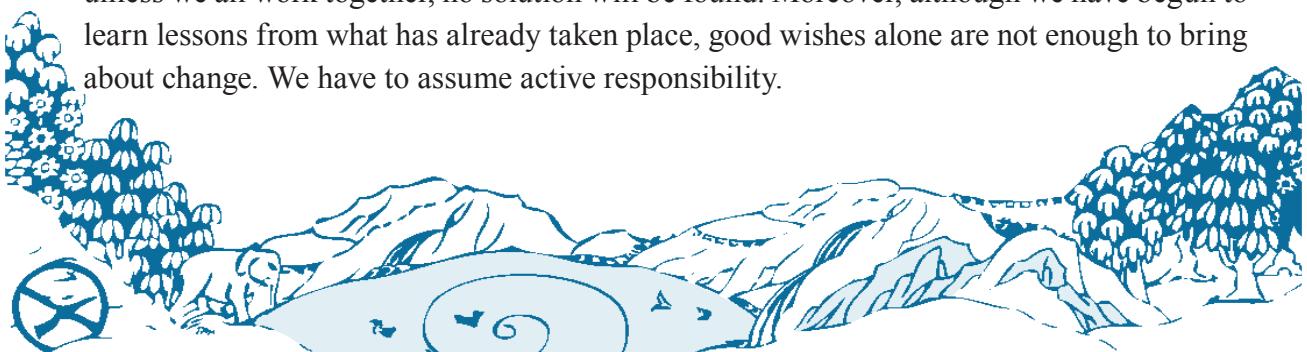
We know that our sense of self is misleading. In fact, what is self is not independent from the rest of life around us. The food we eat, the clothes we wear, and the books we read are produced by other living beings. Even the source of the air we breathe is elsewhere and not within us.

Interdependence

This understanding of interdependence makes us aware that all of life is connected and that our individual actions have immediate consequences in the larger world. This cause and effect is *karma*. Natural catastrophes around the world are extensive and on the rise. Every day, we hear of floods, hurricanes, and droughts and watch people suffer as a result. Much of this suffering is caused by or worsened by human activity and puts the entire planet at risk. As dharma practitioners we have a responsibility to reverse negative actions through skillful means so that there is a healthy and balanced future for all life.

Buddhism & the Environment

Buddhism has a long tradition of environmental protection. Buddha taught the concepts of interdependence, of cause and effect, of *karma*, and of dharma values (Pratītyasamutpāda). Most dharma practitioners want to contribute positively to preserving the environment, but unless we all work together, no solution will be found. Moreover, although we have begun to learn lessons from what has already taken place, good wishes alone are not enough to bring about change. We have to assume active responsibility.



Environmental Guidelines for Karma Kagyu Buddhist Monasteries, Centers and Community

The suggestions contained in these guidelines attempt to focus the widespread concern felt throughout Tibet and the Himalayan region about the decline in the state of the natural environment and the clear signs of climate change impacts. They offer reliable information in the hope that readers will develop a fresh perspective, especially one that emphasizes practical action. Based on assessments of environmental problems facing us in this region, five thematic areas are presented: Forests, Water, Wildlife, Waste and Climate Change.

Forests Protection: Forests are necessary for life-both human and animal. Monasteries can protect them through reforestation, and minimizing grazing and over-harvesting in degraded areas.

Water Protection: The rivers in Tibet and the Himalayas give life to hundreds of millions of people in Asia. They should be protected from pollution, landslides and floods, which are caused by roads and deforestation. Monasteries, especially in river source areas, can lead in environmental protection of water resources.

Wildlife Protection: Wildlife, especially large Asian cats like tigers and leopards are directly threatened by the illegal wildlife trade. Monasteries can discourage ornamental use of furs by local communities, as well as ban hunting in their vicinity.

Waste Management: For environmental, aesthetic and health purposes, monasteries can encourage better management of waste and prevention of pollution-not only on their own lands, but also in the larger community.

Addressing Climate Change: The impact of climate change is being strongly felt in Asia and most strongly on the Tibetan plateau where the glaciers that feed the major Asian river systems are in rapid retreat. To reduce the impacts, monasteries can lead communities in using renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Monasteries and centers should assess which of these thematic areas and guidelines are most applicable to them and follow the guidelines accordingly.



1

FOREST PROTECTION

Trees have a great significance in Buddhism. Buddha Shakyamuni was born as his mother leaned on a tree, he became enlightened seated under the Bodhi tree and he finally passed away lying down between two Sal trees. The forests in Tibet and the Himalayas are particularly rich and plentiful, and around the world they play an important life-giving role. They provide millions of people with wood for fuel, timber for building houses, fodder for animals, and food and medicine. They are home for amazing wildlife such as tigers, elephants, bears, leopards, a variety of birds that nest among their trees, and a huge diversity of amphibians and insects.

Forests have another very important purpose: they are part of a natural cycle that provides clean water and clean air. Earth's atmosphere is made of oxygen, carbon and nitrogen gases. Each breath that we take in is made up of oxygen. When we breathe out, we exhale carbon dioxide. Trees, on the other hand, take in carbon dioxide and breathe out oxygen. In one year, an average tree inhales 12 kilograms of carbon dioxide and exhales enough oxygen for a family of four. Forests are essential for transforming and storing carbon dioxide emissions produced by humans.

Since trees also absorb and hold water for long periods, forests provide a lot of moisture in the air. When this moisture evaporates, it doesn't disappear, but condenses into clouds which eventually result in rain. This is why forests regulate water flow in the area and can help control floods. They also reduce soil erosion because their roots are able to keep large amounts of soil in place. This is especially important in the mountain areas of the Himalayas and the Tibetan Plateau where there are a lot of floods and landslides.

As problems caused by pollution and climate change continue to grow, protecting our forests is one of our few chances to restore a natural balance.

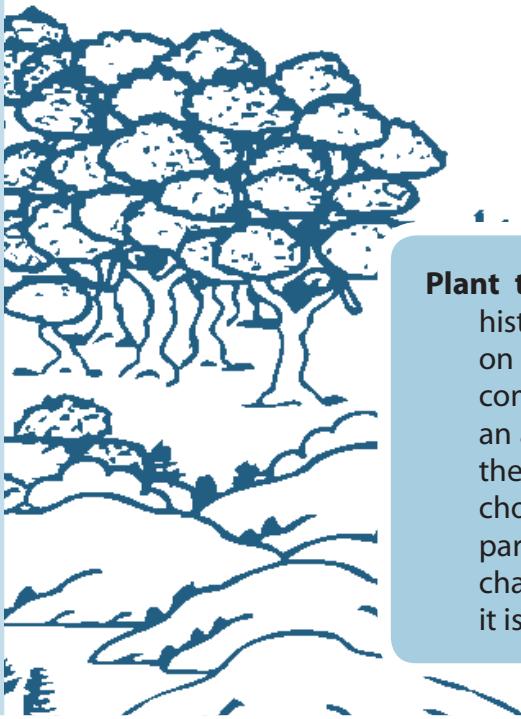
What is the problem?

Sadly, forest loss is taking place at a rapid rate. In Tibet, deforestation is driven mainly by logging for timber. In the past, logging was sustainable because communities were small. However, in the last fifty years, many billions of dollars worth of Tibetan timber have been extracted. As more and more nomadic communities are settled by the authorities, local demand for timber will continue to rise. Most forestry authorities rely on the trees' ability to grow back but the rate of natural regeneration cannot keep up with the demand for timber. In the mid-Himalayan range, the biggest threats to forests are caused by expansion of agricultural lands into forests, and over-use of fuel wood and other forest products. In the lower lying areas of the Himalayas, overgrazing of livestock is the largest threat.

What can we do about it?

It is important that we think of forests as a finite resource that must be used sustainably. If we don't act accordingly and protect them, they will disappear and leave people much poorer than they are now. Natural regeneration is no longer sufficient as a strategy and we need to actively plant trees and reforest barren lands. But the most important thing is to prevent the excessive cutting of trees in the first place.

GUIDELINES FOR FOREST PROTECTION



Plant trees to restore forests: Monasteries in historically forested areas should plant trees on degraded monastery-owned lands or community lands. Monasteries should make an attempt to select trees that already grow in the surrounding area. This is important because choosing native tree species will make them part of the natural landscape and increase their chances of survival. When planting many trees, it is best to plant a variety of different types.

Protect existing forests from over-harvesting of products:

of products: Forests usually provide plenty of resources for poor nearby communities. This includes everything from fuel wood, honey, and medicines, to straw and fodder. But many forests suffer because too much is taken out without giving the forest a chance to recover. This leaves everyone with too little. Monasteries should encourage sustainable extraction of these resources.

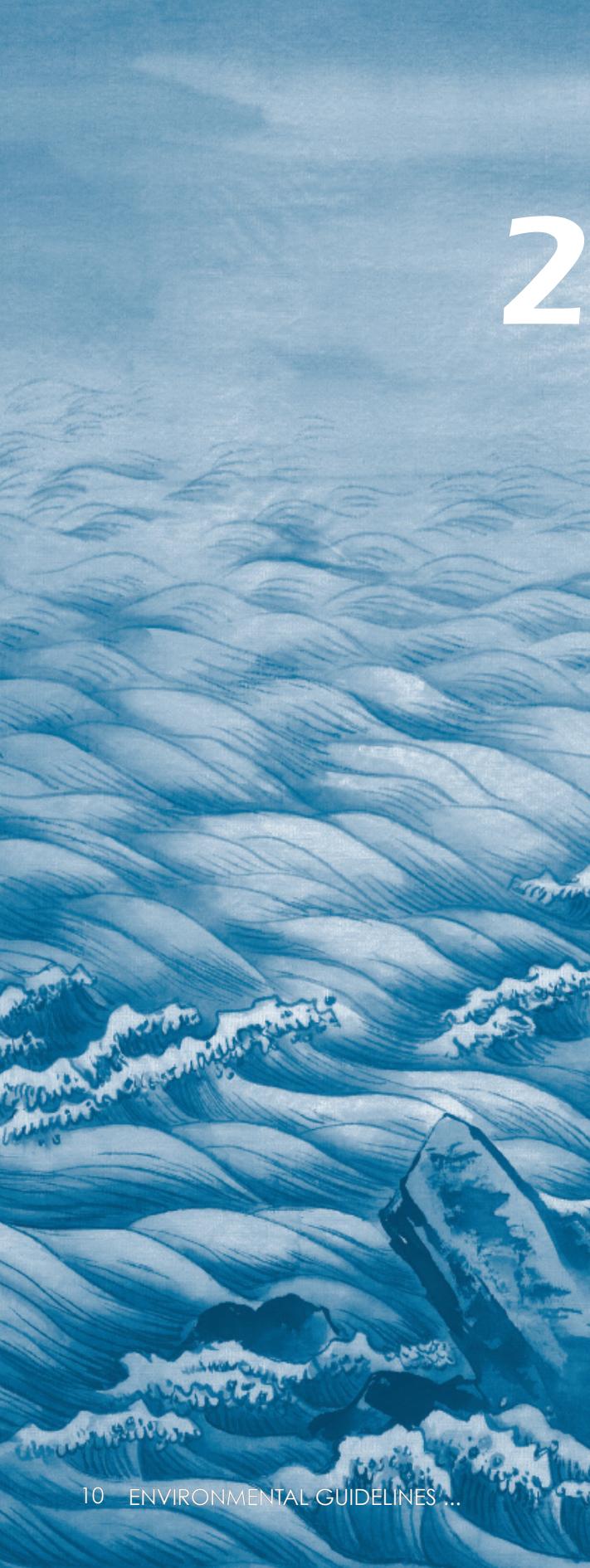




Prevent excessive deforestation: Monasteries in rich forested areas should be careful to manage the forests on their lands. They should not carry out indiscriminate logging and should try to harvest trees so that the forest itself is not destroyed.

Protect grasslands in high altitude areas: Many parts of the Tibetan Plateau are not forested but consist of grasslands and rangelands that are the fundamental basis of livelihoods for Tibetan nomadic communities. The combination of over-grazing and agricultural expansion (especially to grow barley) is eroding this type of habitat very quickly. Tibetans mistakenly believe that small animals like the pikas are degrading the pastures. However, this is not the case. The over-abundance of pikas is actually a symptom of over-grazed grasslands and due to the killing of the wild predators who feed on these animals. Monasteries should educate communities about the capacity of grasslands so that communities keep fewer and healthier livestock rather than large herds that are not as healthy. Traditional practices of community pasture management are still the best way to manage grasslands from a sustainable perspective.

Limit grazing in forested land: Monasteries should limit the number of cattle that graze on forested lands and especially in the Himalayan low lands where grazing is destroying the vegetation. Fencing off some of these groves will help regenerate the forests, and improve biodiversity. Areas that are fenced off can be rotated so that each forest area is used two out of every three years and left to recover for at least one year.

A vertical blue-toned illustration on the left side of the page. It depicts a vast ocean with numerous small, white-capped waves. In the background, there are faint outlines of distant landmasses or mountains under a light blue sky.

2

WATER PROTECTION

Water is the source of life; without it we cannot survive. Yet, it is often the resource we take most for granted. We waste it in areas where it is abundant, we throw garbage into rivers, we dump pesticides, fertilizers, and toxic chemicals into streams and lakes, and oil spills occur all over the Earth's oceans. Of all the water on Earth, only 2.5 percent is drinkable-fresh water-and is found in rivers, lakes and streams. Tibet is the source for most of the major rivers in Asia including the Brahmaputra, the Ganges, the Indus, the Irrawaddy, the Mekong, the Salween, the Yangtze, and the Yellow River. These rivers provide drinking water, irrigation and food across the regions they flow through. Polluting the rivers near the source or destroying the river system upstream means that fish will disappear from the rivers downstream and the people who depend on freshwater for their livelihoods will be unable to survive.

What is the problem?

The rivers of the Himalayas and the Tibetan plateau are regarded as sacred because they give life to hundreds of millions of people before they reach the sea. Unfortunately, many river ecosystems are now threatened by sewage and industrial pollution, deforestation of watersheds, degradation of natural fisheries and sometimes by construction of hydroelectric dams whose environmental impact has not been correctly assessed. Furthermore, the rapid rate of climate change on the Tibetan plateau is causing glaciers to retreat rapidly. These glaciers are the ‘reservoirs in the sky’ for Tibet’s-and therefore Asia’s-great rivers. Glacial melt water is an essential component of river flow in the Ganges, Indus, Yellow and Yangtze rivers, which can also explain the increase of flooding in recent years.

What can we do about it?

It is our duty to protect the Tibetan glaciers in the north. This is the only way to keep the great Asian rivers free flowing and clean, not only for our benefit but also for the millions of people who depend on them downstream. It is important to see a river basin as one living system and understand that what happens in one part of the river will be felt in another part. We must take responsibility to educate ourselves about the interdependent relationship between glaciers, water ecosystems, and human activity and to share this knowledge as widely as possible among those who can either influence or be impacted by this phenomenon.



GUIDELINES FOR WATER PROTECTION

Protect river sources: If a monastery is situated near the source of a river, it should protect the area as much as possible. This means that steps should be taken to prevent pollution from pipes, canals and cities (municipal wastewater) being dumped into rivers that are used for drinking water. Communities should be discouraged from dumping their waste into rivers and simple alternatives should be provided instead. These include starting composting of organic waste, and collecting garbage through a communal wastemanagementscheme(see Waste Management section).

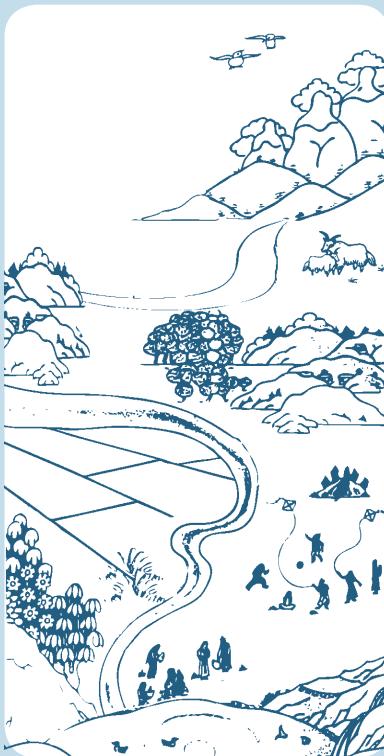
Clean up programs for rivers and lakes:

Monasteries and centers can be at the heart of community based clean-ups by raising awareness of the impacts of littering and dumping waste in rivers. Monasteries can organize clean-up days where volunteers pick up trash near river beds, lake areas, and canals, especially those that are used as drinking sources.

Understand, share knowledge, advocate: Understand and share knowledge of the integrated relationship between Himalayan glaciers, water problems in Asia, and human activity as they influence this relationship. There is an important analogy between the status of Tibet and the Arctic. Both are key elements that reflect the state of the world's climate and both are 'tipping points' in global warming. If we are to avoid future catastrophes in Asia, we must act together to protect Tibet and slow down the rate of glacier loss. This issue goes beyond politics, for it is a matter of mutual survival.

Manage manure and fertilizer use:

Animal waste, pesticides, and fertilizers are often carried by rain run-off into nearby rivers and lakes. There are some simple ways to minimize this type of pollution. Farmers can use less pesticides and fertilizers,especially in high slope or mountainous areas where they are more likely to wash off into the rivers in the valleys below. Farmers can also create vegetation buffers between farm fields and rivers by planting trees and grasses that can absorb and filter out the toxic substances from water before it reaches rivers and canals. Monasteries can promote these kinds of environmental management approaches on and nearby their own lands.



Maintain wetlands: Wetlands are often ignored or drained by people who want to use the land for farming. However, wetlands have a very important purpose. They serve as a natural filter for wastes and garbage and because of the special combination of insects and plants that they host; they purify the water that comes through them before it enters a river or a lake. Protecting and maintaining wetlands will improve the quality of water in rivers and lakes immensely.



3

WILDLIFE PROTECTION

Wildlife refers to all the animals, birds, fish, reptiles, and insects that live in the wilderness. Their diversity and uniqueness is what makes up the biodiversity of our planet. Sadly, their numbers decrease day by day because of our actions and soon many of them will only be found in zoos. Just as we have parents and we wish nothing but good for them, we should feel similarly towards wildlife species that are sentient beings and part of our larger family.

Millions and millions of species exist on Earth. (By contrast, all human beings of all races make up only one species.) Many of these species are insects! It is easy to think that just because a species is very small, it does not have any value. However, every species has a specific purpose in nature—even a lowly earthworm inching in the ground makes the soil richer just by its existence. Biodiversity benefits us in the form of food, shelter, and medicine, as well as revenue from ecotourism which allows tourists to appreciate wildlife and wilderness areas without threatening them.

What is the problem?

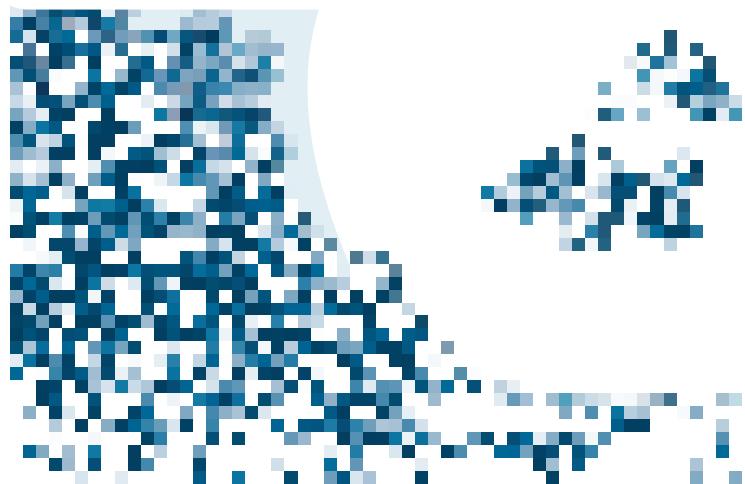
The United Nations Environment Programme and many senior biologists state that due to loss of habitats and climate change, we may lose a quarter to a half of all species by the year 2050.

The Himalayan belt and the Tibetan Plateau make up an area where large numbers of animal, plant and bird species are clustered together. As a result, the region has a very high biodiversity value globally. This value is declining quickly partly due to illegal hunting and trade in wildlife products which targets species like tigers, leopards, elephants and chiru, making them endangered. Traditionally, local people would hunt to meet their needs without depleting the wildlife populations that sustained them. Today, professional hunters come to remote areas and target endangered animals so that they can sell their skins or bones commercially. Wild animals are no longer hunted for food but for fashion (tiger and leopard fur), traditional medicine (tiger parts and bear bile), and exotic restaurants (turtles and snakes).

What can we do about it?

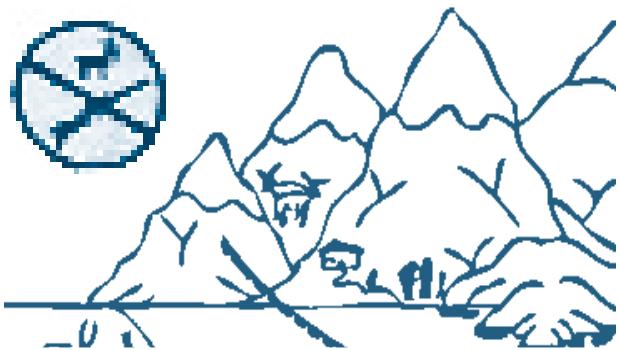
During the 2006 Kalachakra Empowerment at Amaravati, His Holiness the Dalai Lama said: “When you go back to your respective places, remember what I had said earlier and never use, sell, or buy wild animals, their products or derivatives.” Stopping the illegal wildlife trade means protecting the remaining wildlife, so that their populations can be sustained into the future. All Tibetan Buddhists should follow his instruction.

Discourage use of traditional medicine that includes illegal animal products: Many traditional medicines use ingredients that come from a variety of animals and plants including wild ginseng and musk deer. While some of the wildlife products are legal, the demand for endangered animal parts causes illegal wildlife trade to flourish. As much as possible, people should use alternatives to traditional medicines with illegal animal products in them. In particular, people should avoid medicines with tiger and bear products.



GUIDELINES FOR WILDLIFE PROTECTION

Protect wild habitat: One of the biggest threats to wildlife is habitat destruction. If there is no place for them to live, how can they survive? It is important to set aside lands reserved only for wild species and to protect these areas.

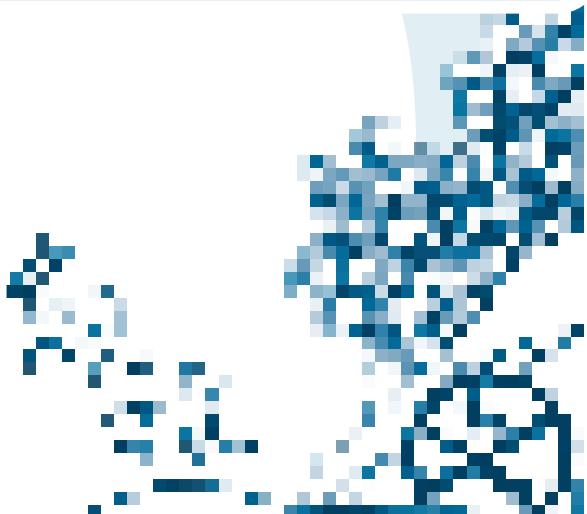


Become well-informed: Become educated and well-informed about the issue of species loss and extinction. As Mahayana Buddhists, we have a special duty to ensure that this Earth, and the many species with which we share it, are healthy as much and as long as possible. We can still save two out of every three species on Earth and this must be our common Buddhist position.



Promote No Hunting Zones: All monasteries should strongly discourage any hunting on monastic lands and nearby common lands. This can be achieved by informing local communities, raising information signs on monastery lands, and monitoring areas where illegal hunting occurs.

Prohibit wearing of ornamental fur from endangered animals: Tiger, leopard and otter skins are being illegally poached from all parts of Asia, and many of them end up in the Tibetan areas of Sichuan, Qinghai and Gansu. There, people sometimes use them as decoration. In keeping with His Holiness the Dalai Lama's edict, monasteries and centers should strongly discourage the illegal trade and wearing of ornamental fur and skins.





4

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Pollution is caused by the unmindful disposal of waste onto the ground or into rivers and lakes. Due to a lack of proper waste management in the Himalayas and the Tibetan plateau, pollution is becoming a big problem. Historically, most communities used organic materials made of plant products. With modernization came a shift to using materials like plastic, glass, and aluminum. Such materials are synthetics which mean that they do not degrade easily in the environment and often release harmful chemicals into the air as they degrade, which leads to long-term pollution.

What is the problem?

If people drink or eat fish from rivers and ponds that have been polluted, they become sick. Freshwater is often polluted by sewage when people dump toilet wastes and household garbage into it, or when industries release contaminated and toxic wastes into it. Often, diseases such as diarrhea and typhoid are caused by bacteria found in sewage or household garbage. The major source of air pollution is the smoke released from coal-fired power stations, car and truck exhausts, which is why people who live in large industrial cities often suffer from breathing ailments such as asthma. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that pollution and health issues are closely connected.



What can we do?

There are three simple rules to reduce waste, and these are known as the 3Rs:

- **Reduce:** Use fewer things on a daily basis.
- **Reuse:** Instead of throwing away things like plastic bottles and bags, reuse them for storage.
- **Recycle:** Collect and sort or segregate materials like paper, plastic, glass and metals to be converted into new products.

Traditionally in Tibet and the Himalayas, almost everyone practiced the 3 Rs as a way of life. These days, people are less likely to do so. Not only can monasteries become leaders to implement these rules, they can also work more directly to improve waste management in their communities. In addition, monasteries can work with local community based organizations to set up communal waste management schemes that use the guidelines presented on the following page.



GUIDELINES TO MINIMIZE POLLUTION AND MANAGE WASTE

Create a clean environment:

Provide garbage disposal bins for different kinds of waste on monastery grounds and in surrounding communities to collect organic (i.e. food scraps) and inorganic waste.

Compost organic materials: Collect food scraps and plant materials to create compost that can be applied to monastic vegetable gardens. Compost keeps soil rich and moist, reducing the need for artificial fertilizers.



Create safe storage: Store inorganic waste materials (i.e. plastic and metals), far from water sources like rivers and lakes. Collect them periodically to send them to nearby towns for reuse or recycling.

Reduce the use of plastic: Plastics can take up to a thousand years to break down naturally and are toxic when they do decompose. When light plastics such as plastic bags and wrappings are thrown away carelessly, they are easily dispersed by the wind. If they end up at sea, or in rivers and lakes, they can suffocate species including fish and turtles. On land they endanger wild and domestic animals that try to eat them.



5

ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

The Earth' s climate has altered several times over hundreds of millions of years with major ice ages and several large scale global warming events. For example, 55 million years ago, the release of huge volumes of natural gas from beneath the ocean caused a “runaway” global warming event that destroyed most of the species on Earth. However, recent human activities are so extreme that climate variations are taking place very frequently and forcefully, and no longer in a balanced way.

Our climate has been stable for the last 12,000 years and this is what has allowed the development of human agriculture and civilization to take place. However, the Industrial Revolution which started in the 18th century led to the extraction and burning of fossil fuels and therefore large releases of carbon gas into the atmosphere. The continuation of this type of industrial economic growth remains the root cause of climate change now taking place.

What is the problem?

The dependence on fossil fuels for energy is caused by the need to power industrial growth, agricultural development, and consumer-driven economic growth. The burning of fossil fuels and the cutting down and burning of trees has led to an overall increase of heat-trapping gases in the Earth's atmosphere. These gases, also known as greenhouse gases, create a barrier which prevents heat from escaping our atmosphere. Over the years, the earth's surface temperature has continued to rise, especially as other countries, like India and China, have started industrializing. The warmest years in human history have all been since 1998. If this trend continues, many species will become extinct and life on Earth as we know it will come to an end.

Climate change is already a dangerous threat in the high altitude areas of the Himalayas and the Tibetan Plateau. In the short term, many of the lakes and wetlands in the mountains will swell due to melting glaciers leading to the overflowing of lakes and flash floods. This can have catastrophic effects in remote areas as people will not have access to medicine, safe drinking water and other necessities. In the long term, water, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, the whole Tibetan ecosystem and age-old way of life are all endangered by the climate breakdown.

What can we do about it?

The bad news is that we are already experiencing many changes in rainfall and snowfall patterns and temperature increases. Scientists are pointing out the rising frequency of storms and floods, droughts and fires caused by climate change.

However, it is human activity that is causing this to happen, changing our behavior can avert many of these impacts. Experts agree that the average rise in temperature of the Earth's surface must not grow above another 2°C, beyond which there will be severe irreversible changes. We must do all we can, as one global community, to minimize energy use, change our energy sources from fossil fuels to renewable energy, and stop deforestation.

GUIDELINES FOR MITIGATING CLIMATE CHANGE

Use fuel-efficient stoves: Now, with new technology available in India and Nepal, it is quite affordable to use fuel efficient stoves that require less wood or coal for fuel but produce more energy. Similarly, monasteries can invest in biogas stoves, which are relatively cheap. These stoves use methane generated by human or animal waste, a good source of energy. Another important (but more expensive) option for generating hot water is to install rooftop solar panels in high mountainous areas where there is a consistent supply of sunlight.

Design energy efficient buildings: Many monastic buildings are built to be large and impressive but not to be efficient in terms of size and building materials i.e. concrete and marble in cold climates. Examples of sustainable building designs include the use of proper insulation for walls and roofs that prevent heat from escaping, allowing natural light to illuminate the building so that less electricity is needed, planting certain tree species around the buildings so that air circulation is fostered during warm weather and heat is conserved during cold weather.

Minimize the collective carbon footprint:

Monasteries can minimize their collective use of energy and reduce their "carbon footprint" (the accumulated amount of carbon gas released into the atmosphere as a result of activities like driving cars and trucks, using electricity and other energy sources). A carbon-neutral lifestyle can be attained by conserving energy and using alternative energy sources. Centers that cannot go carbon neutral can offset their carbon use by planting trees or restoring forests either on their own lands or in forest areas in the Himalayas and Tibet.

Eat less meat or become completely vegetarian:

In simplest terms, food is energy and the food that requires the least amount of energy to produce is vegetarian: grains, vegetables, pulses, fruits and so on. Animals that live on plants take energy from the earth. Those of us who eat meat take up even more energy than these animals. People should consider giving up meat not only to practice compassion for animals, but also to reduce the burden they are putting on the Earth. All Kagyu monasteries practice vegetarianism--they should also encourage individuals to cultivate compassion for all living things and lighten the load the Earth already carries.

GUIDELINES FOR ADAPTATION IN HIGHLY VULNERABLE AREAS

Develop emergency relief plans: In areas that are likely to be affected by glacial melting, landslides, or even flooding, monasteries should reach out to emergency relief, health and environmental non-governmental organizations to set up disaster management plans within their communities.

Plan new construction carefully: Monasteries can also set up partnerships to assess where best to build new constructions-for example, establish the projected flooding line on mountain slopes above rivers.

Monitor changes carefully: Many NGOs and government bodies are tracking impacts of climate change and have set up projects that monitor them. Monasteries in areas like the Kanchenjunga tri-national area, where glacial lake outbursts are expected, can work with these groups to better prepare and educate their communities.

GUIDELINES FOR THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY

Work towards a unified Buddhist response: Communities should work towards a unified Buddhist response to climate change. This could be skillfully articulated in time to influence the UN Climate Conference in Copenhagen (December 2009) and represent the concerns of the international Buddhist Sangha (over 350 million strong). It is not too late and we still have a window of opportunity to save the Earth's climate from runaway climate change.

Advocate for Renewable Energy: We can join the worldwide call for a moratorium on construction of all new coal-fired power stations. We can actively support the move for a rapid, international transition to renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, and thermal power.



Conclusion

Buddha taught that the well-being of all life on Earth, not just human, is important and equally valuable. Just as human beings wish to flourish, so do the different forms of non-human life. Hence, we have an obligation to adhere to a more thoughtful way of living, which results in a natural balance and a harmonious future.

Monasteries and centers should decide which of these environmental threats affect them the most and see what guidelines are most appropriate for them. If they wish to pilot this approach more thoroughly, they can work directly with an Environmental Advisor, which will be set up by the Karmapa's Administrative Office. The Advisor will work with them to set up an action plan and develop environmental activities, as well as help to guide and monitor progress. In general, the following steps should be taken in order to put the guidelines into effect:

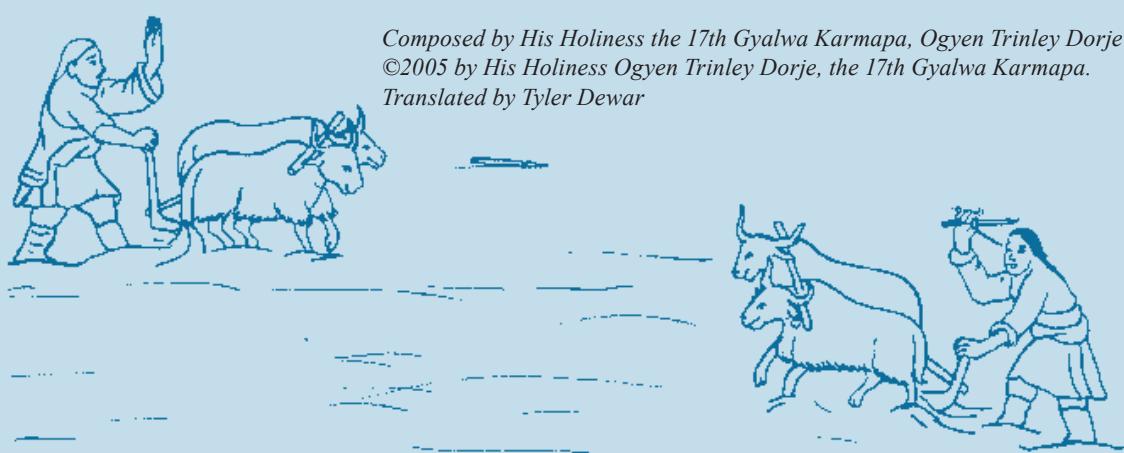
1. Elect an Environmental Coordinator who can learn more about this issue and be trained as required
2. Prioritize which environmental issues monasteries and centers want to work on and develop an action plan
3. Identify government departments or environmental and aid organizations that the monastery can partner with
4. Approach local partners and community based organizations
5. Set up a three-year action plan
6. Implement environmental protection activities
7. Develop a working group of Environmental Coordinators to review progress among the monasteries and centers and develop future strategies and plans



AN ASPIRATION FOR THE WORLD

World, we live and die on your lap.
On you we experience all our woes and joys.
You are our ancestral home of old.
Forever we cherish and adore you.
We wish to transform you into the pure realm of our dreams.
We wish to transform you into a land for all creatures,
Equal for all and free of prejudice.
We wish to transform you into a loving, warm, and gentle goddess.
Our hope in you is so ever resolute.
So please be the ground on which we all may live
So all these wishes may come true,
So all these wishes may come true.
Do not show us the dark side of your character,
Where nature's calamities reign.
In every section of our world's land
May there thrive a fertile field of peace and joy,
Rich with the leaves and fruits of happiness,
Filled with the many sweet scents of freedom.
May we fulfill our countless and boundless wishes.

*Composed by His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje
©2005 by His Holiness Ogyen Trinley Dorje, the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa.
Translated by Tyler Dewar*

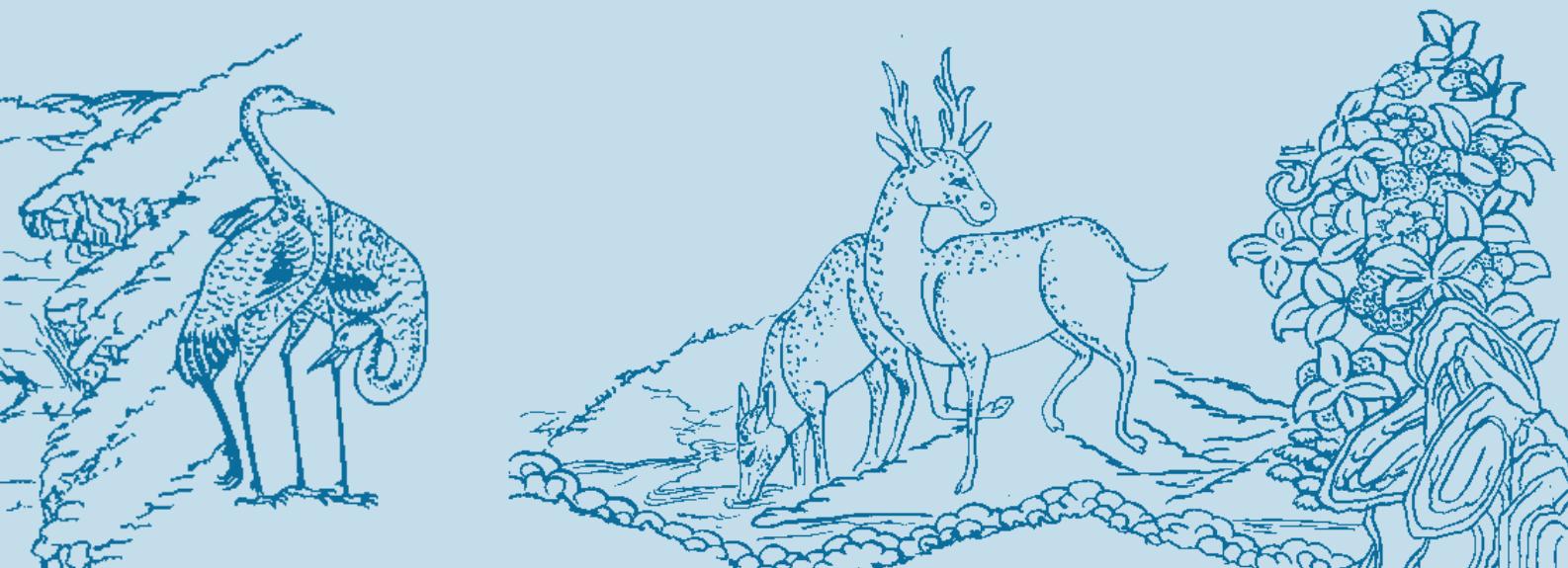


Quote by His Holiness the Dalai Lama
on Page 3 used with permission

Paintings on Pages 6, 10, 13, and 19
by His Holiness the Seventeenth Karmapa

For more information, please contact
Tsurphu Labrang Dharamsala,
the Karmapa's Office of Administration

Mailing Address
Karmapa's Office of Administration
P. O. Sidhbali-176 057
Dharamsala, District Kangra (H.P.) India
Tel: 91-1892-235154 or 91-1892-235307
Fax: 91-1892-235744





TSURPHU LABRANG
Karmapa's Office of Administration

www.kagyuoffice.org

